

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2013 Yukon River Fall Salmon Fishery News Release # 18

Fall Update # 3, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Fall Season Assessment

The estimated cumulative fall chum salmon total run size through August 11, based on run reconstruction, is 309,000 fish. This is below the historical median of 345,000 fish for that date. The drift test fishery project corroborates the timing and relative passage strength estimated by the Pilot Station sonar project. The department is now using inseason data for run assessment, based primarily on passage at Pilot Station sonar and harvest below to project total run size for fall chum salmon. Median passage typically occurs on August 10 at Pilot Station therefore the projected 2013 fall chum salmon run size based on median to late run timing, ranges between 700,000 and 900,000 fish. However, it is likely the 2013 fall chum salmon run will be closer to the lower end of this projection.

Chum salmon have entered Yukon River in three distinct groups with periods of low passage numbers observed in between. The individual groups peaked on July 24, July 29 and August 5 respectively in the LYTF, the largest of which equated to approximately 93,250 fish by Pilot Station. However, a substantial pulse of fall chum salmon has yet to be observed entering Yukon River. Water temperatures in the lower river have either been above historical averages or have exceeded maximum recorded temperatures since late July. In addition, the Lower Yukon River area has yet to see the strong west and southwest winds that are typical this time of year and tend to push fall chum salmon into the river. Collectively, these factors may explain the absence of a substantial pulse of fall chum salmon to date.

Lower Yukon test fish catches of fall chum salmon have remained low the past several days with and increase this morning in one of the test net sites. As a consequence, fall chum salmon daily passages at Pilot Station sonar should be relatively low over the next several days. Assessment of this latest group of fish in ongoing however passage at Pilot Station is behind so commercial fishing is still on hold.

Coho salmon have been increasing in Yukon River however it is still too early to determine run size. The cumulative passage by the Pilot Station sonar project through August 11, based on run reconstruction, is approximately 15,000 coho salmon, which is below the historical median for that date of 20,000 fish.

Lower Yukon River Cooperative Drift Test Fishing – YDFDA, ADF&G

The cumulative CPUE for fall chum salmon through August 11 was 755.58, which is above the historical median of 662.50 for that date. The cumulative CPUE through August 11 for coho salmon was 45.21, which is below the historical median of 78.24 for that date.

Pilot Station Sonar Project - ADF&G

The cumulative fall chum salmon passage through August 11 is approximately 217,000 fish, which is below the median passage of 311,000 fish for that date. The cumulative coho salmon passage through August 11 is approximately 10,300 fish, which is slightly below the median passage of 11,000 fish for that date.

Rapids Test Fish Wheel Project - Zuray

The cumulative fall chum salmon CPUE from July 21 through August 11 is approximately 3,200 fish, which is slightly above the historical median of 3,000 fish for that date. The cumulative based on the adjusted water level is also only slightly above the historical median for that date.

Eagle Sonar Project - ADF&G

The cumulative Chinook salmon passage at Eagle sonar is estimated to be approximately 29,300 through August 11, which is below the average of 52,200 for this date. The preliminary projection at Eagle sonar for Chinook salmon passage is approximately 30,200 to 31,000 fish. A passage of this size would be below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,500 to 55,000 adopted by the joint US-Canada Yukon River Panel and would not provide for Canadian harvest share levels specified in the Treaty Agreement.

Salcha River Tower - BSFA

The cumulative count for Chinook salmon through August 11 is approximately 4,900 fish. The escapement goal of 3,300 – 6,500 for Chinook salmon in the Salcha River has been achieved. The cumulative count for summer chum salmon is approximately 55,500 which is above the median of 26,600 for this date.

Chena River Tower – ADF&G

Chena River Tower completed operations on August 6. The preliminary cumulative count for the season was 1,653 Chinook salmon. The escapement goal of 2,800 – 5,700 for Chinook salmon in the Chena River has not been achieved. The preliminary cumulative count for summer chum salmon is approximately 21,400, which is above the median of 7,400 for this date.

Stock Identification

Fall chum salmon genetic samples processed from July 30 through August 6 passage at Pilot Station sonar indicate that stocks represent approximately 12%, 30%, and 41% for Tanana, Border/US (Chandalar/Sheenjek), and Canada respectively. Summer chum salmon made up approximately 17% of the fish sampled during that time period.

Age Composition

The fall chum salmon age composition from the 6" LYTF drift nets through August 12 was 61.2% age-4, 36.1% age-5, and 2.7% age-6 fish. The average age-4 fish is 63.6% for this date and average age-5 fish 35.1%. Females contributed 60.2% to the samples, which is above the average of 56.1%. The sample size was 688 fish for ages and 701 for gender.

The combined fall chum salmon age composition from commercial harvest periods in District 1 (through August 5) was 59.6% age-4, 39.8% age-5, and 0.6% age-6 fish. The proportion of females in the commercial catch samples was 48.1%. The sample size was 434 fish for ages and 440 for gender.

Fall Season Management

In accordance with the Yukon River Drainage Fall Chum Salmon Management Plan, a total run ranging from 600,000 to 700,000 fish is adequate for escapement needs, full subsistence opportunity, and has a surplus available for other uses. Subsistence fishing is now on the full regulatory schedules in the Yukon River drainage (see subsistence schedule below).

Additional commercial fishing opportunity will be dependent upon inseason run strength assessment. Because of the recent lull in fall chum passage past Pilot Station sonar, no commercial periods have been announced in Districts 1 or 2 since August 5. Once passage numbers increase to desired levels commercial fishing is expected to continue. When possible, the department may adjust the timing of the commercial periods as pulses of fall chum salmon are moving through each district. Otherwise the normal fishing schedule is Mondays and Thursdays in District 1 and Wednesdays and Sundays in District 2. Currently there are no commercial periods announced.

The fall season commercial salmon fishing season is open in Districts 3 and 4. The fall commercial salmon fishing season in Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C will open at 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 6. Processors, catcher-sellers, or direct marketers should notify the department of their intent to operate in any of these districts and subdistricts by contacting the Fairbanks office at (907) 459-7274.

Fall Commercial Salmon Fishing

Through August 12, six fall commercial fishing periods have been announced in District Y-1 and five periods in District Y-2.

Preliminary harvest information for District Y-1:

The cumulative harvest for Y-1 through August 11 is 53,430 fall chum and 3,589 coho salmon, and the incidental harvest (not sold) of Chinook salmon is 14 fish.

Preliminary harvest information for District Y-2:

The cumulative harvest for Y-2 through August 11 is 35,460 fall chum and 1,109 coho salmon, and the incidental harvest (not sold) of Chinook salmon is 24 fish.

Summer Season Assessment and Management

The Chinook salmon run is nearly complete in the Alaska portion of the drainage as the tail end of the run continues to trickle across the border. Chinook salmon passage at the Eagle sonar site has declined dramatically over the course of the last week. The cumulative passage at the Eagle sonar is approximately 29,300 Chinook salmon through August 11, which is well below the historical cumulative average of 52,200 for this date. The preliminary projection at Eagle sonar for Chinook salmon passage is expected to be between 30,000 and 31,000, which would fall well below the Interim Management Escapement Goal of 42,500 to 55,000. In preparation for the fall season, subsistence fishing schedules and restrictions have been relaxed in the lower and middle portions of Subdistrict 5-D. Upper Subdistrict 5-D will reopen at 12:00 noon Wednesday, August 14, and subsistence salmon fishing be open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week with no gear restrictions.

Summer Commercial Salmon Fishing

The summer commercial salmon fishing season in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B is open to target summer chum salmon. The 42-hour commercial salmon fishing periods coincide with the District 6 subsistence fishing time.

Through August 11, six summer season commercial fishing periods have occurred in District 6 and the preliminary cumulative commercial harvest is approximately 5,900 summer chum salmon.

At this time no buyers are operating in District 6. However, processors, catcher sellers, or direct marketers wishing to operate in District 6 should notify the department of their intent to operate by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

Subsistence Salmon Fishing

For the current subsistence schedule please call (toll free): **1-866-479-7387** or in Fairbanks call (907) **459-7387**. The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District: The Coastal District is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Districts 1, 2, 3: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after each commercial fishing period. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

The Innoko River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk. Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A is currently open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays to 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Use of drift gillnets to harvest fall chum salmon is allowed in that portion of Subdistrict 4-A from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point during open subsistence fishing periods.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek): This area includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby. Subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Sundays to 6:00 p.m. Fridays.

In District 4, fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence salmon fishing in the Koyukuk River is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B and 5-C: Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C are open 5 days per week for subsistence salmon fishing. The subsistence salmon fishing schedule will be from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller during open subsistence salmon fishing periods.

Subdistrict 5-D has been divided into three separate areas, in an effort to protect Chinook salmon as they pass through this long section of river.

Subdistricts 5-D-Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker 2 miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver): Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less and all salmon may be kept when caught in fish wheels.

Subdistricts 5-D-Middle (from the Hadweenzic River to the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Fort Yukon, and Chalkyitsik): Subsistence salmon fishing is open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less and all salmon may be kept when caught in fish wheels.

Subdistrict 5-D-Upper (from the upstream mouth 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle and Eagle): Subsistence salmon fishing is currently closed. Effective 12:00 noon Wednesday, August 14, subsistence salmon fishing will reopen and remain open 24-hours per day, 7 days per week. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less and all salmon may be kept when caught in fish wheels.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the downstream mouth of Wood River): This area includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana. Subsistence salmon fishing is open for two 42-hour periods per week from 6:00 pm Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and from 6:00 pm Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence fishing for salmon is open for one five day fishing period per week from 6:00pm Fridays until 6:00pm Wednesdays. Fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or smaller.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River): This area includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha. Personal Use salmon fishing in Subdistrict 6-C is open from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays, and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays. Fisherman may use a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at 1-866-479-7387 (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call (907) 459-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Emmonak at 949-1320 or in Fairbanks at 459-7274. The Emmonak ADFG office will stand by on VHF channel 7A.

This has been an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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